

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

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R 211139Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3464

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 8287

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KN, KS, TH

SUBJ: THAI/KOREAN RELATIONS

SUMMARY: THE SOUTH KOREAN AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED WITH THE CHARGE THE RECENT VISIT OF A NORTH KOREAN TRADE DELEGATION TO THAILAND. HE ALSO MENTIONED IN CONFIDENCE A PROJECTED TOUR OF THE SOUTH KOREAN PRIME MINISTER TO ALL FIVE ASEAN COUNTRIES. ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT ANALYSIS OF WHETHER NORTH KOREA IS IN A POSITION TO SELL FERTILIZER ABROAD. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING LUNCH WITH THE CHARGE MAY 21, THE NEWLY ASSIGNED KOREAN AMBASSADOR, BYUNG KYU CHUN, RAISED THE ISSUE OF THE NORTH KOREAN TRADE DELEGATION THAT VISITED THAILAND APRIL 26 TO MAY 1. KOREAN COUNSELOR EI MYUNG KIM, WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT, SAID THAT THE SOUTH KOREAN STANCE WAS TWO-FOLD. FIRST, THE EMBASSY WOULD SHOW NO IRRITATION. KIM SAID THAT HE HAD TAKEN THE PHONE OFF THE HOOK, AND REFUSED INTERVIEWS TO NEWSMEN WHEN THE NORTH KOREAN DELEGATION WAS IN THAILAND. DESPITE MAINTAINING ABSOLUTE SILENCE, THE PRESS ERRONEOUSLY REPORTED HIM AS FURIOUS IN HIS
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REPRESENTATIONS AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

2. THE SECOND TACTIC WAS TO FIND SOME COMMODITY THE THAI NEEDED THAT SOUTH KOREAN COULD SELL TO THAILAND, PERHAPS AT CONCESSIONAL PRICES. THE CHARGE SUGGESTED FERTILIZER, BUT CHUN REPLIED THAT KOREA WAS QUITE SHORT ON THAT COMMODITY. KOREA, HOWEVER, EXPECTED TO BUILD A LARGE FERTILIZER PLANT IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY IN THE NEAR FUTURE, AND IT WOULD PRODUCE APPROXIMATELY 700,000 TONS FOR EXPORT BY 1976. WHEN THE CHARGE SUGGESTED PETROLEUM, KIM POINTED OUT THAT KOREA HAD A SURPLUS OF DIESEL FUEL WHICH IT HAD BEEN EXPORTING TO AUSTRALIA, BUT HAD STOPPED WHEN THE FUEL CRISIS HIT. AMBASSADOR CHUN SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THE SURPLUS STILL EXISTED, AND THAT SOME DIESEL FUEL WAS CURRENTLY MAKING ITS WAY TO HONG KONG. HE SUGGESTED ALSO THAT KOREA HAD A SURPLUS OF OTHER POLYMER PRODUCTS WHICH MIGHT BE EXPORTED TO THAILAND.

3. CHUN MENTIONED THAT THE SOUTH KOREAN PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE MAKING A TOUR IN THE NEAR FUTURE OF ALL FIVE ASEAN COUNTRIES. HE EXPECTED TO START WITH THAILAND IN MID-JUNE. THEY HAVE APPROACHED RTG FOR APPROVAL BUT RECEIVED NO REPLY (WITH CURRENT CRISIS PHONE MAY BE DEAD FOR A WHILE). KIM ASKED US TO HOLD THIS INFORMATION IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.

4. CHARGE' WENT OVER WITH AMBASSADOR CHUN APPROACHES WE HAD MADE TO RTG AT TIME OF VISIT OF NORTH KOREAN TRADE DELEGATION AND SAID OUR JUDGMENT STILL WAS THAT RTG WOULD PROCEED SLOWLY AND CAUTIOUSLY. ASKED FOR HIS VIEWS ON ROK RESPONSE TO SITUATION, CHARGE' SUGGESTED ROK KEEP COOL, NOT MAKE ANY STATEMENTS WHICH WOULD ADD FUEL TO FIRE AND SEEK WAYS OF DEMONSTRATING TO KEY THAIS THROUGH TRADE OR AID BENEFITS OF GOOD RTG-ROK RELATIONS. CHUN AGREED BUT SAID HE WAS HAVING TROUBLE RESTRAINING SEOUL. CHUN AND CHARGE' AGREED TWO EMBASSIES WOULD STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH ON SITUATION.

5. CHUN SAID THE NORTH KOREANS HAD PROMISED FERTILIZER TO BOTH INDONESIA AND THAILAND, BUT HAD NOT SPECIFIED QUANTITY. HE WAS UNAWARE THAT NORTH KOREA HAD ANY SIGNIFICANT QUANTITY
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OF FERTILIZER TO DISPENSE. HE ASKED WHETHER WE COULD OBTAIN ANY INFORMATION FOR HIM ON THIS SCORE.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT PLEASE PROVIDE AN EVALUATION, THAT WE WOULD PASS TO AMBASSADOR CHUN, OF NORTH KOREAN FERTILIZER PRODUCTION AND IMPORTS THAT MIGHT PROVIDE THE DPRK WITH ENOUGH SURPLUS TO SELL ABROAD.
MASTERS

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